

the shop of a diligent, industrious mechanic, whom I have often seen busy at his trade, with his arms bare, hard at work. His industry and steadiness have been successful, and he has gained a competency. But he still remains wisely devoted to his trade. During the day you may see him at his work, or chatting with his neighbours. At night, he sits down in his parlour, by his quiet fireside, and enjoys the company of his friends. And he has the most extraordinary collection of friends that any man in New England can boast of. William H. Prescott goes out from Boston, and talks with him about Ferdinand and Isabella. Washington Irving comes from New York, and tells him the story of the wars of Grenada, and the adventurous voyage of Columbus, or the legend of Sleepy Hollow, or the tale of the Broken Heart. George Bancroft sits down with him, and points out on a map, the colonies and settlements of America, their circumstances and fates, and gives him the early history of liberty. Jared Sparks comes down from Cambridge, and reads to him the letters of Washington, and makes his heart glow with the heroic deeds of that god-like man for the cause of his country. Or, if he is in the mood of poetry, his neighbour Washington Allston, the great painter, steps in and tells him a story,—and nobody tells a story so well,—or repeats to him lines of poetry. Bryant comes with his sweet wood-notes, which he learnt among the green hills of Berkshire. And Richard H. Dana, father and son, come, the one to repeat grave, heart-stirring poetry, the other to speak of his *Two Years before the Mast*. Or, if this mechanic is in a speculative mood, Professor Hitchcock comes to talk to him of all the changes that have befallen the soil of Massachusetts, since the flood, and before; or Professor Espy tries to show him how to predict a storm. Nor is his acquaintance confined to his own country. In his graver hours, he sends for Sir John Herschel, from across the ocean, and he comes and discourses eloquently upon the wonders of the vast creation,—of all the worlds that are poured upon our sight by the glory of a starry night. Nor is it across the stormy ocean of blue waves alone that his friends come to visit him; but across the darker and wider ocean of time, come the wise and the good, the eloquent and the witty, and sit down by his table, and discourse with him as long as he wishes to listen. That eloquent blind old man of Scio, with beard descending to his girdle, still blind, but still eloquent, sits down with him; and as he sang, almost three thousand years ago, among the Grecian isles, sings the war of Troy, or the wanderings of the sage Ulysses. The poet of the human heart comes from the banks of Avon, and the poet of Paradise from his small garden-house in Westminster; Burns from his cottage on the Ayr, and Scott from his dwelling by the Tweed;—and, any time these three years past, may have been seen by his fireside a man who ought to be a hero with school-boys, for no one ever so felt for them; a man whom so many of your neighbours in Boston lately strove in vain to see,—Charles Dickens. In the midst of such friends, our friend the leather-dresser lives a happy and respected life, not less respected, and far more happy, than if an uneasy ambition had made him a representative in Congress, or a governor of a State; and the more respected and happy that he disdains not to labor daily in his honorable calling.

"My young friends, this is no fancy sketch. Many who hear me know as well as I do, Thomas Dowse, the leather-dresser of Cambridgeport, and many have seen his choice and beautiful library. But I suppose there is no one here who knows a neighbour of his, who had in his early years the same advantages, but who did not improve them;—who had never gained this love of reading, and who now, in consequence, instead of leading this happy and desirable life, wastes his evenings with low company at taverns, or dozes them away by his own fire. Which of these lives will you choose to lead? They are both before you.

"Some of you, perhaps, are looking forward to the life of a farmer;—a very happy life, if it be well spent. On the southern side of a gently sloping hill in Natick, not far from the place where may be still standing the last wigwam of the tribe of Indians of that name, in a comfortable farm-house, lives a man whom I sometimes go to see. I find him with his farmer's frock on, sometimes at the plough-tail, sometimes handling the hoe or the axe; and I never shake his hand, hardened by honorable toil, without wishing that I could harden my own poor hands by his side in the same respectable employment. I go out to look with him at trees, and to talk about them; for he is a lover of trees, and so am I; and he is not unwilling, when I come, to leave his work for a stroll in the woods. He long ago learnt the language of plants, and they have told him their history and uses. He, again, is a reader, and has collected about him a set of friends, not so numerous as our friend Dowse, nor of just the same character, but a goodly number of very entertaining and instructive ones; and he finds time every day to enjoy their company. His winter evenings he spends with them, and in repeating experiments which the chemists and philosophers have made. He leads a happy life. Time never hangs heavy on his hands. For such a man we have an involuntary respect.

"On the other side of Boston, down by the coast, lived, a few

years ago, a farmer of a far different character. He had been what is called fortunate in business, and had a beautiful farm in the country, and a house in town. Chancing to pass by his place, some four or five years ago, I stopped to see him. And I could not but congratulate him on having so delightful a place to spend his summers in. But he frankly confessed he was heartily tired of it, and that he longed to go back to Boston. I found that he knew nothing about his trees, of which he had many fine ones,—for it was an old place he had bought,—nor of the plants in his garden. He had no books, and no taste for them. His time hung like a burden on him. He enjoyed neither his leisure nor his wealth. It would have been a blessing to him if he could have been obliged to exchange places with his hired men, and dig in his garden for his gardener, or plough the field for his plough-man. He went from country to town, and from town to country, and died, at last, weary and sick of life. Yet he was a kind man, and might have been a happy one but for a single misfortune,—*he had not learned to enjoy reading*. The love of reading is a blessing in any pursuit, in any course of life;—not less to the merchant and sailor than to the mechanic and farmer. What was it but love of reading which made of a merchant's apprentice, a man whom many of you have seen and all heard of, the truly great and learned Bowditch?"

"If I were to pray for a taste," remarked the learned Sir John Herschel, "which should stand me in stead, under every variety of circumstances, and be a source of happiness and cheerfulness to me through life, and a shield against its ills, however things might go amiss, and the world frown upon me, it would be a taste for reading. Give a man this taste, and you place him in contact with the best society in every period of history,—with the wisest, and the wittiest, with the tenderest, the bravest, and the purest characters which have adorned humanity. You make him a denizen of all nations—a contemporary of all ages. This world has been created for him. It is hardly possible but that his character should take a higher and better tone from the constant habit of associating with a class of thinkers, to say the least of it, above the average of human nature."

"Books," says Dr. Edwards, "are the greatest storehouses of the knowledge which the observation, experience, and researches of successive generations have been accumulating. They offer to us the intellectual wealth which myriads of laborers have been gathering, with painful toil, for thousands of years." "If all the riches of both the Indies," exclaims Fenelon, "if the kingdoms of Europe were laid at my feet, in exchange for my love of reading, I would spurn them all."

"The *working man*," says Rufus Choate,—"*by whom I mean the whole brotherhood of industry*—should set on mental culture, and that knowledge which is wisdom, a value so high—only not supreme—subordinate alone to the exercises and hopes of religion itself. And that is, that therein he shall so surely find rest from labor; succor under its burdens; forgetfulness of its cares; composure in its annoyances. It is not always that the busy day is followed by the peaceful night. It is not always that fatigue wins sleep. Often some vexation outside of the toil that has wasted the frame; some loss in a bargain; some loss by an insolvency; some unforeseen rise or fall of prices; some triumph of a mean or fraudulent competitor; 'the law's delay, the proud man's contumely, the insolence of office, or some one of the spurns that patient merit from the unworthy takes'—some self-reproach, perhaps—follow you within the door; chill the fire-side; sow the pillow with thorns; and the dark care is lost in the last waking thought, and haunts the vivid dream. Happy, then, is he who has laid up *in youth*, and held fast in all fortune, a *genuine and passionate love of reading*. True balm of hurt minds; of surer and more healthful charm than 'poppy or marjoram, or all the drowsy syrups of the world'—by that single taste, by that single capacity, he may bound in a moment into the still region of delightful studies, and be at rest. He recalls the annoyance that pursues him; reflects that he has done all that might become a man to avoid, or bear it; he indulges in one good, long, human sigh, picks up the volume where the mark kept his place, and in about the same time that it takes the Mahomedan in the Spectator to put his head in the bucket of water and raise it out, he finds himself exploring the arrow-marked ruins of Nineveh with Layard; or worshipping at the spring head of the stupendous Missouri, with Clark and Lewis; or watching with Columbus for the sublime moment of the raising of the curtain from before the great mystery of the sea; or looking reverentially on while Socrates—the discourse of immortality ended—refuses the offer of escape, and takes in his hand the poison, to die in obedience to the unrighteous sentence of the law; or, perhaps, it is in the contemplation of some vast spectacle or phenomenon of Nature that he has found his quick peace—the renewed exploration of one of her great laws—or some glimpse opened by the pencil of St. Pierre, or Humboldt, or Chateaubriand, or Wilson, or the 'blessedness and glory of her own deep, calm, and mighty existence.'"